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Theme for the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2006 of the Economic and Social Council

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note is intended to facilitate consultations among Member States on the theme for the high-level segment or successor arrangement of the substantive session of 2006 of the Economic and Social Council. It contains proposals by Member States as well as by organizations of the United Nations system. Proposals by intergovernmental bodies are also included in the note.

In his report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005) the Secretary-General has made a number of proposals to strengthen and revitalize the Economic and Social Council. These proposals range from making the Council a forum for peer review of progress in the implementation of the agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and convening a development cooperation forum once every two years, to the need for changing its working methods.

The nature of the changes that the Economic and Social Council will introduce in its structure and functioning as a result of the decisions that the September summit will take cannot be anticipated in detail. It can be assumed, however, that promoting and monitoring the implementation of the United Nations development agenda will be at the centre of the work of the high-level segment or successor arrangement in the period ahead. A part of the ministerial segment of the Council's session of 2006 could, therefore, be devoted to peer review for which modalities will be decided later.

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This should not exclude the selection of a specific topical theme to be addressed by ministers, alongside the review referred to above. Member States, intergovernmental organizations and organizations of the United Nations system have provided an array of rich and wide-ranging proposals for the theme for 2006. The summit is expected to take major decisions in addressing the linkages of development and security. To build on the summit outcome, the Council could select a theme that addresses the challenges of development, including external debt, trade, foreign direct investment, official development assistance, technology and governance in post-conflict situations. Therefore, the following theme is recommended for the Council's deliberations and policy discussions during the high-level segment or successor arrangement of 2006: "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in countries emerging from conflict".

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I. Introduction

1. The present note is submitted to facilitate consultations among Member States on the theme for the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2006 of the Economic and Social Council.

II. Theme for the high-level segment

2. In paragraph 53 of annex I to its resolution 50/227, the General Assembly decided that, with regard to the theme for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Council, following consultations with Member States and, through the Secretary-General, with members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should present a proposal for a topical theme for the following year at the annual substantive session of the Council.[1] It also decided that at its annual substantive session, the Council should undertake consultations on the theme for the high-level segment with a view to reaching a decision, if possible during the substantive session, but not later than at a resumed session in the autumn following the annual session.

3. The Secretary-General consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 31 January 2005. The Secretariat consulted the organizations of the United Nations system and received proposals for a theme. All these proposals as well as proposals by intergovernmental bodies are contained in annexes I to III.

A. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

4. In selecting the theme for its high-level segment, the Economic and Social Council may wish to take into account the following considerations:

(a) The Council may wish to choose a major economic and/or social policy theme of topical interest;

(b) The theme should allow for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach;

(c) The theme should enable the Council to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the international trade and financial institutions;

(d) The deliberations of the high-level segment should provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitate the consideration of the issues in question, including the emergence of new recommendations on the issues

[1] It may be recalled that the General Assembly, in paragraph 42 of its resolution 57/270 B, requested the Economic and Social Council to establish a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of its substantive session. In pursuance of that resolution, the Council adopted the theme "Towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration" for the coordination segment of the Council in 2005 and decided to continue consultations on a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of the Council, with a view to finalizing the programme before the 2005 substantive session.

in the relevant forums (see General Assembly resolution 45/264, annex, para. 5 (d) (i));

(e) It may be recalled that the Agenda for Development specified that the Council, in a high-level segment, should consider major issues for international cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. The high-level segment should be used for improving the synergy between the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In so doing, the Council should also contribute towards enhancing the interaction between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (General Assembly resolution 51/240, annex, para. 252 (a));

(f) It may also be recalled that, in the event that a matter of high urgency and priority subsequently emerges that would qualify as a theme for the high-level segment, the Council may, as appropriate, consider that theme as an additional topic for discussion at its high-level segment (see General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, para. 53).

5. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 2001/27, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, when it considered the themes for its high-level and coordination segments, information about the multi-year work programmes of the functional commissions. The requested information is contained in the forthcoming consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions in 2005, which will be before the Council.

6. The themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments in previous years are set out in the box below.

Themes examined by the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segments since 1995

1995 Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

1996 International cooperation against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotics and psychotropic substances and related activities.

1997 Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade.

1998 Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round: implications, opportunity and challenges, in particular for the developing countries and the least developed among them, in the context of globalization and liberalization.

1999 The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women.

2000 Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy.

2001 The role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development.

2002 The contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development.

2003 Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

2004 Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

2005 Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities.

B. Proposals by the Secretary-General

7. In his report entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), the Secretary-General has made a number of proposals to strengthen and revitalize the Economic and Social Council. These proposals range from making the Council a forum for peer review of progress in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals, and convening a development cooperation forum once every two years, to the need for changing its working methods.

8. The nature of the changes that the Economic and Social Council will introduce in its structure and functioning as a result of the decisions that the September summit will take in the light of the proposals of the Secretary-General and the views of Member States cannot be anticipated in detail. However, it can be assumed that promoting and monitoring the implementation of the United Nations development agenda will be at the centre of the work of the high-level segment or successor arrangement in the period ahead. A part of the ministerial segment of the Council's session for 2006 would therefore have to be devoted to peer review, for which modalities will be decided later.

9. This should not exclude the selection of a specific topical theme to be addressed by ministers, alongside the review referred to above. Member States, intergovernmental bodies and organizations of the United Nations system have presented an array of wide-ranging proposals for selecting such a theme for 2006. These suggestions provide a sound basis for developing a proposal for next year. However, there is a need to ensure that the theme should enable the Economic and Social Council to build on the outcome of the September summit, as it is expected to take important decisions with regard to the linkages of development and security. The Council could reinforce the efforts to implement these decisions by selecting a theme that addresses the challenges of development, including external debt, trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), official development assistance (ODA), technology and governance, in specific situations like countries emerging from conflict.

10. Against this backdrop, the issue of promoting longer term development in countries emerging from conflict, particularly in Africa, needs to be given serious consideration. The Economic and Social Council has already contributed to linking the issues of security and development by establishing the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Guinea-Bissau and Burundi. These groups have successfully begun to help in mobilizing a system-wide coordinated response to the needs of those countries.[2]

11. In July 2003, the General Assembly adopted by consensus its resolution 57/337 on prevention of armed conflict. In paragraph 32 of the annex, the Assembly supported the more active involvement of the Economic and Social Council with regard to the prevention of armed conflict, taking into account the need to promote socio-economic measures, including economic growth, in support of poverty eradication and development, as a core element of Council strategy in that regard. More recently, the Secretary-General recommended that the Economic and Social Council should institutionalize its work in post-conflict management by working with the proposed Peacebuilding Commission and that it should also reinforce its link with the Security Council in order to promote structural prevention (A/59/2005, para. 178).

12. In the light of the above considerations, the following theme is recommended for the Council's deliberations and policy discussions during the high-level segment or successor arrangement of 2006: "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in countries emerging from conflict".

13. Such a focus would enable the Economic and Social Council to make a distinct contribution to help integrate conflict perspective more firmly in development policies and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as in the follow-up processes to United Nations summits and conferences, in particular the September summit.

[2] On 15 July 2002, at its substantive session, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2002/1, by which it decided to consider creating a framework for an advisory group at the request of any African country emerging from conflict. Council decision 2002/304 established the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi was established by Council resolution 2003/16.

Annex I

Proposals by Member States

(a) Libyan Arab Jamahiriya: (i) "International coordination and cooperation to address the global water crises, with a view to securing safe drinking water for everyone in the world"; (ii) "International cooperation aiming at enhancing the ability to fight epidemics and infectious diseases";

(b) The United States of America: "Promoting good governance and combating corruption";

(c) Japan: "The current state of and future prospects for cooperation among developing countries and between developed and developing countries in promoting South-South trade and foreign direct investment";

(d) Lebanon: (i) "Innovative debt management techniques and debt rescheduling to maximize the socio-economic benefits of debt reduction on heavily indebted developing countries"; (ii) "Optimize the socio-economic benefits of trade liberalization and free trade blocks by enhancing the competitiveness of developing countries"; (iii) "The challenges and opportunities of the knowledge economy to developing countries"; (iv) Promoting the transfer of know-how, technology, foreign direct investment (FDI) and human resources to emerging and developing economies";

(e) European Union: "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Review Summit and achieving the Millennium Development Goals";

(f) Venezuela: "The incidence that the payment of the foreign debt has had on the poverty growth in developing countries, in terms of the social cost and the investments that are sacrificed in the national budgets as a consequence of the indebtedness";

(g) Bolivia: "External debt and its influence in the eradication of poverty: entailment with commerce, financing and poverty";

(h) India: Focus on themes that would pay greater attention to the "adverse international economic environment faced by developing countries and the role that the international financial and trade institutions could play in alleviating these adverse conditions".

Annex II

Proposals by organizations of the United Nations system

(a) World Food Programme: "Meeting the needs of children: an essential foundation for achieving the Millennium Development Goals";

(b) United Nations University: (i) "Strengthening the ability of recipient countries to absorb increased aid flows and to use them effectively for development"; (ii) "Addressing and resolving the environmental causes and consequences of violent conflict"; (iii) "New initiatives to mobilize private and public finance for education";

(c) International Maritime Organization: (i) "International shipping — carrier of world trade"; (ii) "International cooperation to enhance social security and ensure sustainable socio-economic development"; (iii) "Promoting an integrated approach to safeguarding the marine environment as a global source of nutrition, sustainable biodiversity and natural wealth";

(d) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: "Role of the Economic and Social Council in leading the work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and institutions and supporting the Member States in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration as well as the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits";

(e) The World Tourism Organization: "Special measures for the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in countries that are facing the aftermath of severe natural disasters, epidemics or terrorism";

(f) International Labour Office: "The role of international trade and finance in support of national strategies to promote the quality and quantity of employment and efforts to combat poverty";

(g) International Monetary Fund: "The relevance of national policies to promote growth";

(h) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: (i) "The role of the United Nations in implementing the first phase (2005-2007) of the Plan of Action for the World Programme for Human Rights Education, with particular focus on countries emerging from conflict or recovering from natural disasters"; (ii) "The United Nations as a forum for fostering education for sustainable development activities in governments, non-governmental organizations, and other partnerships and as a means to support the Millennium Development Goals"; (iii) "Capacity-building for enhancing sustainable development"; (iv) The challenges of building a knowledge society"; (v) "Public and private sector cooperation: achieving international development goals in an equitable, sustainable and environmentally sound manner through effective partnership"; (vi) "Fostering an environment for evidence-based policy-making"; (vii) "Bridging the gap between researchers and policymakers to put science in the service of social needs"; (viii) "Enhancing the role of the sciences for social and sustainable development"; (ix) "Achieving internationally agreed development goals by improving the cooperation between Ministers of Social Development and Ministers of Economy and/or

Finance"; (x) "The role of cultural heritage in economic development (in addition to the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the adoption in 2003 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, a Convention that is expected to enter into force in 2006, aims at safeguarding living cultural heritage transmitted from generation to generation)"; (xi) "Building inclusive knowledge societies: harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies"; (xii) "Promotion of productivity, scientific and technical innovation, access to and sharing of knowledge, including indigenous knowledge, as factors of acceleration of economic and social transformations in developing countries, particularly in Africa"; (xiii) "Rehabilitation and promotion of non-structured economy, particularly of non-formal and family economies, in countries with difficulties, as a means of fighting against poverty and improving the living conditions of the vulnerable population, mainly youth";

(i) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: "The impact of corruption on economic and social development";

(j) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: (i) "From relief to development: towards ensuring sustainability"; (ii) "Combining conservation and sustainable use of natural resources with poverty reduction"; (iii) "Mobilizing national and international action in response to natural disasters: lessons from recent experiences";

(k) Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: "Labour markets and the challenges to social protection in a globalized world: demographic transformations, changing employment relations and migration".

Annex III

Proposals by intergovernmental bodies

1. In its resolution 2003/60 on public administration and development, the Economic and Social Council reiterated that strengthening public administration and the State were at the forefront of the development agenda to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and that revitalizing public administration was considered to be one of the essential components of economic and social development, and in that context decided to explore the possibility of considering that theme at a future high-level segment.

2. At the third session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, held at United Nations Headquarters from 29 March to 2 April 2004,[a] the Committee recommended that the Economic and Social Council reaffirm the role of the public service in the fulfilment of the specific national goals for socio-economic development, as they are key indicators of the Member States' attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, the Committee reiterated its earlier recommendation to the Council that it devote one of its next high-level segments to the changing role of a public administration geared to development, both economic and human, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, with public service delivery as the pivotal element. The Committee of Experts proposed that the segment could be entitled: "A service-oriented public administration for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals".

3. At its 49th plenary meeting, on 25 July 2003, the Economic and Social Council took note of draft decision II adopted by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the elements contained therein and decided to consider indigenous issues as a theme for its high-level segment in 2006, in accordance with established procedures set out in General Assembly resolution 50/227 (decision 2003/301, "High-level segment of the substantive session of 2006 of the Economic and Social Council").

4. In its Plan of Implementation, the World Summit on Sustainable Development[b] called upon the Economic and Social Council to organize periodic consideration of sustainable development themes in regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, including the means of implementation. Recommendations in regard to such themes could be made by the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Commission has not made any recommendation so far.

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[a] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 44* (E/2004/44).

[b] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.